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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

Monday, October 16, 1944

Subject: "Women Help Make Another Crop Record" Information from farm labor specialists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Today, let's salute the women and girls who've done farm work this year.

The harvest job isn't entirely finished yet, but there're enough crop returns in, to show pretty clearly what sort of a food production job farm families and their helpers have done.

Well,.... they've done a peach of a job- both farm women and city women. They've helped to turn in another record crop . . . early fall conditions indicate that our overall crop production this year will be 4 percent higher than last year.

If fall weather is favorable and frosts are late, crops might even turn out to be the largest in aggregate volume this country has ever produced.

This is the way the principal crops look now:

The wheat crop is the largest on record....well over a billion bushels .... the second billion-bushel wheat crop in our history.

The corn crop will exceed last year's by 25 million bushels. The sorghum-forage crop is excellent. So is the tobacco crop. There'll be good crops of cotton, rice, oats and barley. In some localities, there're hay shortages, but on the whole the hay crop is very good.

Prospects for commercial truck crops are the highest in history--in spite of cutbacks in snap beans, green peas, and sweet corn that dry weather caused. They're good crops of tomatoes, beets, and lima beans . . . and bumper crops of onions, lettuce, and cabbage.

Commercial apples declined slightly but the deciduous fruit crop in general

is 21 percent above last year. The outlook for citrus fruit is on a par with last year.

These record crops have been grown in spite of all the delays in planting last spring. . . all the local setbacks from dry weather this summer. . . provoking hold-ups that wartime conditions cause . . . and the most acute shortage of farm workers since the war started. In spite of all these handicaps, the farm factories of America have handled their production job again this year in a manner that equals industrial production miracles.

The burden of the farm production job fell heaviest on farmers themselves, of course. They had to plan, supervise, struggle with inexperienced help, direct operation, and work longer hours. But they'll tell you with intense earnestness that they never could have got the job done without the women and girls who've helped them---women and girls of their own families and women and girls from towns and cities to bridge the gap left by 3,000,000 regular farm workers lost to the war.

Individual contributions don't sound very important when the overall job's so big. It's not surprising that a woman like Mrs. Roy Pool of Garland County, Arkansas, brushes it off modestly when somebody mentions the fine job she did this summer "spelling" her husband on the tractor at mealtime to keep it going and speed up the plowing and haying. But women in every State did the same thing and when you add up what they all accomplished, it totals bigger acreages.

There's Esther Friedman and Marcia Bach and Bessie Hudetz, three Chicago girls who never were on a farm in their lives until they detasseled hybrid seed corn on the Leonard Pfeister farm in Illinois.

They lived in a camp with 90 other women and girls from Chicago and 30 from Peoria. Esther was a cadet nurse on vacation, Marcia a young school teacher, and Bessie a high-school girl. They worked all day in corn rows half a mile long . . . no matter how hot.

Besides their farm work, these girls organized a benefit show and sold over $10,000 worth of war bonds to local people. All the talent for the show, which gave a repeat performance by request, came from the corn detasseling camp. One of the stars was a corn detasseler who sings at the Chicago Grant Park Concerts.

Kansas produced a big part of our record wheat crop this year, and Kansans are justly proud that they were able to handle the enormous harvesting job which has to be done quickly to save the grain--in about 10 or 12 days.

Thousands of Kansas women helped. Among the proudest are four girls from a department store in Beloit, Kansas, who took their vacations to work in the wheat Rita Eilert weighs only 114 pounds but she spent all her vacation driving a truck to the grain elevators. The hours were longer than store hours--from seven-thirty in the morning to ten o'clock at night. The other three girls were Margene Witt, Christine Rouquet (Row-ket) and Mildred Schaffer. Mildred has four brothers in the Service--one just returned from North Africa, one in England, one in France, and one on Saipan.

We say it again . . . the women who did farm work this year did a grand job, and America proudly salutes them.

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